



Islander April 2010 Technology Update

Apples and Pairs

Apples

The much hyped iPad has now gone on sale. Probably the most hyped Apple product since the iPhone. I have not yet had my hands on one so all I have been able to do is read the reviews, which are many and varied, and also surprisingly inaccurate.

The iPad is a tablet PC, or simply a thin, smallish, touchscreen of 9.7" in diagonal. It is a halfway house between a smartphone and a laptop. By using an on-touchscreen keyboard you can wordprocess, and you have all the smartphone apps all in one, but you cannot use it to make calls.

The reviews say it is a converged device that can do many different things, but is it the best device to do any of these properly?

The feature brief I have summarised is as follows:

Firstly, it can be used as a digital photo frame or a slide show presentation screen either at home or in the office. The screen size would be reasonable to use on the hoof, at a desk or in the kitchen, but it wouldn't be as good as using a projector, or full-sized flat screen TV.

Secondly, how about its use as a media player, accessing YouTube, or watching full movies whilst of the move? You would have to download movies, and as a music player it won't fit neatly into your pocket, but it would work.

Thirdly, you could use it as a sat-nav using Google Maps with the GPS and digital compass or download an App. It would be a big sat-nav compared to a Tom-Tom size device.

A fourth option is as an eBook reader. You can buy books from Apple's new iBook Shop. The iPad uses an LED screen so it will use considerably more battery power than the Amazon Kindle that only uses battery power to turn the pages. The battery life of the iPad is rated to be about 10 hours which is better than the iPhone.

How about for gaming? It has a built in accelerometer motion sensor so you can use it as a F1 steering wheel to drive around Silverstone. This could be a lot of fun.

Finally, how good is it as a computer? You point and navigate directly through the touchscreen rather than using a mouse or a

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trackpad. This is fine for surfing or looking at photos but for typing long documents it just doesn't work. I am very experienced with this as I use an HP SmartTouch laptop that can be used as a tablet PC, just like the iPad, with a touchscreen by cleverly inverting the screen and folding it flat over the keyboard, or as a laptop with a physical keyboard, touchpad or mouse.

I am currently writing this article using it, but I am using the physical keyboard. I can't use the touchscreen keyboard, it doesn't work for me, it is too uncomfortable and you have to look down at it on the table or prop it up. The ergonomics of a tablet just don't work for typing work. However, I do prefer to use it as a touchscreen tablet when web browsing with the ability to use the screen to drag pages around and to expand and close screens. What you do have to be careful about is sacrificing ease of use in order to look cool.

Also, as with the iPhone, you cannot multitask with the iPad, you cannot open two bits of software at the same time. You cannot be writing something and check on your emails at the same time. However this will come in the future as Apple have just launched a new multitasking operating system for the iPhone this week, so I am sure it will be on the iPad shortly.

The most bizarre element to the launch of the iPad is that it lacks connectivity, when most of what Apple have made their success on depends on connectivity. The first iPads were only able to get online by connecting via a physical ethernet cable. At the end of March, just before it went on sale in the US, a wi-fi version was launched and they say that a version that adds 3G connectivity will be available only some time this month!

So I presume that the 400,000 iPads that were sold in the first weekend only had cable and wi-fi connectivity.

As a result of Apple's extraordinary success with the iPod and iPhone they have managed to create this hype for the iPad. The big question to me is whether this product will justify it?

Technology Pairs

We have a current pair of 3D developments. Currently our AV team are getting themselves up to speed on everything we need to know about 3D TV, which is happening faster and will become much bigger this year than expected. I will report on this next month. In the last few weeks, I have come across a 3D printer, from those very clever guys at HP again. I have to say I didn't know such a thing existed. These are also referred to as "rapid prototype" machines and are the preserve of industrial designers. The printer builds 3D models, layer by layer, using plastic widely



used in injection-moulded products. A snip at €10,000. Your imagination runs riot when you think what models you could print!

You may think my article heading of Apples and Pairs is a little too contrived and I am trying too hard, but hold that thought as I have also come across another “pair” of similar technologies this month, so I feel justified. This is a pair of new charging technologies. This is not an April Fool, it’s for real. Firstly, a charging mat that you put on your desk or chart table and when you put anything with a rechargeable battery on it, it gets charged by just sitting there. Google the word Powermat if you want to know more.

The second one is rechargeable cloth. You can now produce cloth that can hold a charge like a battery. So recharging your mobile or MP3 player could be as simple as plugging it into your T-shirt or trousers. This is a new advance in nano technology. Scientists have discovered a way to turn fabrics such as cotton or polyester into “conductive energy textiles” that act as rechargeable batteries. So you could and will be able to plug your shirt into the mains over night to charge it up and then use it during the day to recharge your cell phone, iPod, or VHF! It’s true, honestly.

How about a touchscreen shop window? Somebody else showed me a shop window idea where you run your finger across it and a menu pops up listing the shop’s departments. You can touch through the options to find out if they do have that rechargeable T shirt in stock, to avoid that walk through the ladies cosmetics department to the electronic gadget department or would it be the men’s clothes department? I think this one ranks alongside the press release from Sloane Helicopters about the Mallorca oilfields. Thanks guys.

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